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Published in:
Victim Victorious

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Recommended citation(APA):

Holden, S. S., Patron, M. C., & Rokach, A. (2015). Preface. In M-C. Patron, & S. S. Holden (Eds.), *Victim Victorious: From Fire to Phoenix* (pp. vii-xix). Nova Science Publishers.

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PREFACE

VICTIM VICTORIOUS: FROM FIRE TO PHOENIX

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Everyone is a victim—at some point, in some way, suffering is inevitable. As Buddha declared in The First Noble Truth: “there is suffering.” It is a descriptive truth of the way that the world is.

Some people are victims in a small way – and we are likely to hear about their victimhood in conversation as people share what happened to them and how they have suffered at the hands of others, or due to natural circumstances. Others are victims on a much grander scale – and we hear about their victimhood in the media, in newspapers, in books.

Being victimized is not something that the individual chooses. But it happens and so the question of how to address it is important. Victimization is inevitable. So what can we do about that? While victimization is inevitable, victimhood is not. Indeed, the world admires those who have suffered difficult circumstances and yet succeeded in rising beyond their victim status as pointed out in the cases given earlier. Their example gives us hope and inspiration. Becoming a victim may be bad luck, but to rise above victimhood is something that depends on the desire, the will, and the power of the individual. Victimization is inevitable, victimhood is a choice.

Consider these famous victims.

Charlie Chaplin, famous silent film star, was left as a young boy by his mother to be raised in an institution. His films are famous and even today provide a great deal of laughter, pathos and social insights.

Steady Eddie, an Australian comedian famously makes light of his own condition, cerebral palsy, not just in his ironic name, but throughout his humor.

Alexandre Jollien, a Swiss philosopher was born with cerebral palsy. He provides inspiring thoughts and ideas for others in their journey out of suffering, often with much humor and lightness.

*Viktor Frankl, a renowned writer and psychotherapist was incarcerated in a concentration camp during the Second World War. His book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, is a particularly approachable account of both his experiences, his surviving the concentration camp, and for introducing his system for helping people redress their victimhood.*

Ingrid Poulsson, an inspiring Australian writer and trainer on how to rise above victimhood lost her father and her two children, all three killed by her estranged husband.

Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani girl and famous education campaigner survived being shot by the Taliban as a fifteen year old schoolgirl and rose to become a Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2014 at 17 for her efforts to fight for the right for young people everywhere and regardless of gender, to have access to education.

All were victims. In each case, the victimization was not the end, but a beginning. These people did not just survive victimhood, but have grown by the experience. To this end, we invoke the image of the Phoenix, the mythical bird that ultimately is reborn in the ashes of the fire in which it died. That is, from the experience of victimhood, it is possible, indeed it is essential that we arise. It is this image of the Phoenix that we hope might inspire people to understand this important distinction that we make. Victimhood is a choice, and at the point that we recognize that choice, the individual sets her wings to fly beyond her circumstances, to go beyond her victimhood, to go from victim to victor.

Perhaps it is useful to examine the ways in which the metaphor is not entirely complete. Whereas the mythical Phoenix is magically made whole, the victim’s journey out of the fire may not be quite like the fairy tale. Rather,

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it is likely to be a work-in-progress, a journeying towards rather than arriving at a destination. The person may never be whole again, but they can be better, they can be greater than at their nadir.

What is this path? Before we explore this question and explore the flight path of the Phoenix, we consider two paths that we often think might provide an answer, although as we shall see, they do not perhaps work the way that we think. The first is the passage of time, the other is justice. We argue that neither suffices, but considering them does offer some useful insights.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

It is often said that “time heals everything.” However, this does not seem necessarily true. People born with severe handicaps, or who become severely handicapped during their lifetime may not find that time provides the solution. People who lose loved ones prematurely will never recover those who have been lost.

What time does provide is, well, time! Healing takes time. For an individual suffering emotional pain, that healing includes processing the hurt, the pain, the suffering. It is over time that we begin to heal ourselves, and yes, this can take some time. Time, then, simply marks the milestones on the path of healing. However, time will pass regardless of the efforts of the individual. In effect, time is like inertia, and even if we do not choose a path, the milestones of time will click by. Healing is achieved by an effort on the part of the individual. Time doesn’t *do* the healing, the individual does – and it will take time.

JUSTICE WILL BE DONE

The other is the appeal of justice, that is that something might happen to right the wrongs that we have experienced.

There is some notion that we do not deserve to be a victim and that the person that creates our victimhood ought not to be allowed to do that. However, being a victim is neither good nor bad, it simply is. Despite our readiness to identify a person or persons who might be responsible for our situation, it is clear that we can be a victim in many circumstances where human involvement is negligible to non-existent. The victims of natural events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, mudslides and so forth will be deprived a perpetrator. So while we may be able to identify a perpetrator, a human being that has contributed to our victimhood, it is not immediately apparent that it is necessarily useful to do so. A victim can be created by a range of natural events, inanimate, animate, and even human.

Nonetheless, when there is a human identified as creating a victim, it is common for us to lay blame at the feet of the human cause, the perpetrator. So someone who has attacked, abused, hurt, ignored and otherwise slighted another is identified as the cause of another’s victimhood. But is this thinking helpful? When we are able to identify a protagonist, we often think in terms of retribution. That is, we hope, believe, even expect that perpetrators will ultimately suffer for their sins. When an individual feels that someone else is to blame for their victim status, there is a feeling that justice might somehow resolve the problem.

However, the value of this sense of justice seems dubious. First, what punishment or retribution can make amends for victims that suffer conditions from which there is no recovery – a severe physical injury, the loss of a child or partner? When the condition from which the individual suffers will continue even if retribution is achieved, we must wonder at the value of this process.

Second, in cultures where revenge and vengeance are honored as appropriate approaches to amending wrongs, they seem to do little to solve the problem and rather, to create a spiralling, never-ending cycle of acts all in the name of avenging another.

Finally, the idea of personal retribution clearly cannot account for victimhood that is the result of some natural, or rather non-human, event. If a friend dies of cancer, a village is wiped out by a natural event, injuries are sustained by a falling tree, etc., the notion of retribution would then appear to fail.

Curiously, there does seem to be a tendency for people to even sometimes seek to blame others for such events. A friend dies of cancer, and we may blame the doctors that failed to save him, the company where he worked for causing the cancer, and so forth. Some of this is what happens in the grieving process (Kübler-Ross 1969, 2005). That is, even if there is no perpetrator and we are a victim of some natural calamity, we may seek to blame others. This highlights that the blaming process is perhaps automatic, but it is not clear that it resolves the

problem. Perhaps we must pass through this stage, but the solution is beyond blame. This may be natural, and it may even be a necessary part of the process, but it does not appear to provide the end solution.

Even allowing that there is no perpetrator that causes an individual's victimhood, there are many that nonetheless hold the notion that the world is just. The idea that "justice will be done" in the end is an appealing one, one that is written into a number of ethical systems. For instance, many of the Indian based religions (Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism) believe in a notion of karma. The idea is appealing, that an individual's good behavior earns them blessings, and that bad behavior earns sanctions. There is a version of this in Christian thought although somewhat different. Again, good acts will be rewarded and bad acts will be punished, but in this case, it will be mediated in a final reckoning.

Today's secular west still conserves a view of karma, a reckoning that will see justice done, it just tends to be more short-term. Where karma is settled over many lifetimes (e.g., Buddhism) or at Judgment day (e.g., Christianity), today many harbor a view that the justice will be delivered much sooner: that the person who cut us off in the traffic or committed an offence against us will get theirs in very short course.

The notion that justice is our right – reflected in the notion that retribution and / or karma can see the wrong righted – is a strong one. We suspect that it is the hope offered by the notion of justice that is important rather than its delivery. It is an aspirational goal – but one that we suspect may sometimes distract the individual from the flight path of the Phoenix. That is, justice, even if it *is* delivered does not deliver a victim out of victimhood. Perhaps it offers some solace to think that the suffering we are experiencing might be offset by some balancing good, but this seems to treat the symptoms rather than the problem.

How is it that the idea that "justice will be done" is consoling? Its major value in our view is that it is a first step that encourages us to let go of the victimhood. If we can let go of our focus on the perpetrator, we can move onto the real job of recovery which rests with us, the victim, not with the persons or entities that offended, harmed or hurt us, or that we consider delivered our suffering.

However, it is nothing more than a first step. We do not believe that this is sufficient for recovery. Again, if we consider the examples of those who have soared out of victimhood, it has not been due to justice being done, it is by dint of their personal effort, their endurance, and their perseverance.

The path from victim to victor is not swift. It takes time. But nor will delivery be assured by nature, or god or any other instrument of justice. The flight path from fire to Phoenix requires the active engagement of the individual. The victim must shift his mindset away from that of being a victim – and even then, must persevere because recovery will take time.

FLIGHT PATHS OF THE PHOENIX

Nietzsche (1889 / 2013, p.5) famously observed "what does not kill me makes me stronger". It is a popular concept, but we suspect that Nietzsche had it only partly right. I may not be killed, but I could be maimed for life. Or in the words of a Marilyn Manson song: "whatever doesn't kill you is gonna leave a scar"².

In effect, once made a victim, there are a number of possible paths. One of them is to stay in victimhood, to suffer, to relive the pain, to be scarred, even maimed for life. There are however, two paths out of the state of victimhood. One is to recover, to heal and to move on. A scar may be a symbol of the hurt, but more importantly, it represents a healed injury. The second is the one captured by Nietzsche's famous maxim, that is to grow from the experience, to become even stronger.

Taking all of this into account, the key is that the individual does not choose to be victimized. This can be accepted. However, the victim does get to choose the path out. Pain is inevitable, suffering is not (Mager 2014). So which will it be? To be maimed, recover, or grow?

Some of the most compelling examples of victim-to-victor may be seen in those human heroes who have journeyed from a place that many might identify as victimhood, but have gone on to make the experience the basis of a great life filled with achievement. Some famous world examples might include Helen Keller, Viktor Frankl, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Malala Yousafzai some of which have been outlined at the start of this chapter.

The path of healing is a search for a cure to end the pain. Just as a physician treats someone who has suffered a major physical disease or illness, this first path is the one where an individual seeks to return herself to a reasonable functioning level of mental health. In this context, the victim chooses a path seeking to end her

² From the song, "Leave a scar" on Marilyn Manson's album, *The High End of Low*, 2009

suffering. However, as in physical illness, some types of trauma will leave the patient permanently disfigured or even disabled in some ways. Just as a person breaking a limb or suffering from a cancer or degenerative disease may always suffer some pain and limitations thereafter, the cure cannot return someone to the place they were before the trauma. The objective is to find relief, to return to a level of reasonable comfort, to be healed – notwithstanding the constraints and limitations that have been created by the trauma, and the signs that might remain thereafter. So the first path out of victimhood is healing, and might be characterized by the search for a cure to end the suffering and pain.

The second path is to thrive. This is more than simply ending the pain, this is about using the experience to become stronger, to grow. In many cases, this is made manifest by individuals who go on to follow their purpose and pursue it vigorously despite their experiences. Whereas the first metaphor for addressing victimhood is a medical one, as in the healing of some physical ailment, the second metaphor is one of physical training. Regardless of our individual circumstances, physical training can improve our conditioning. We may not become an Olympic champion, but we can become better through training.

If we think of the two paths to recovering from victimhood as therapies, the first is to consult a physician for a cure, the second is to consult a trainer or coach to guide and support better conditioning. In the first instance, therapies represent cures sought to reduce the pain and eliminate the condition that is causing the pain. In the second instance, a training regime is employed to help the client to thrive.

This book focuses on the victim's choices, on the victim's paths out of victimhood. It focuses on why some people seem to be able to let go of the circumstances of their victimization. The victims here are in many ways relatively mundane. They are not intended to necessarily illustrate extreme cases of victimhood, but to highlight relatively every-day victimhood. The value it is hoped, is that these stories, and the insights offered, might encourage other victims to see their way to a way out of their victimhood. It is again a choice.

To support this choice and to set up some models that one might use in overcoming victimhood, we first offer two short lay-accounts in the academic literature of how individuals might be "cured" and "thrive" despite victimization. The first is based on psychology, the second on philosophy – although there are notable overlaps between the two as both philosophy and psychology show how trauma, or a life crisis, may lead to positive changes and personal growth (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2008). These changes include changes in self-perception, improved interpersonal relations, reforming new goals in life, a greater appreciation of life, and changes in one's philosophy (Pietruch & Jobson, 2012).

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology has contributed enormously to the way in which people overcome victimhood. Psychology offers a salve for the soul, it is the mental equivalent of a medical practitioner who typically focuses on healing our wounds. The psychologist, psychiatrist, psycho-therapist and related professions typically focus on healing mental wounding.

Victimhood may involve a physical wound, but the wound that may take longer to address is often the mental wound. Psychology therefore has an important role in helping to cure the psychological trauma that is experienced by the victim.

Psychology is therefore, a natural port of call for situations when victims find themselves deeply entrenched in misfortune, unhappiness and despair, when they can perceive no end to the pain and suffering inflicted on them by perpetrators of all shapes and dimensions, when their predicament seems interminable.

While there are many different approaches used in counselling to help people over the hump of victimhood, the focus of most of these approaches is on healing, perhaps on finding a cure for the condition. The second path offered by psychology is more positive, specifically based on an understanding that psychology cannot just help the victim to heal, but provide an opportunity for the individual to thrive, to flourish, to become stronger.

Counselling and resilience

The first path that might be pursued in psychology is for healing. In this context, psychology is to mental trauma as medicine is to physical trauma. And the first-line treatment in this context is likely to be some form of counselling. There are many different types of counselling that have been developed in psychology, although the best approach perhaps depends on the individual and the circumstances, and perhaps the counsellor's own particular facility with different techniques. Perhaps more generally thought, it is noteworthy that counselling

represents an opportunity for victims to tell their story. The telling of the story seems to offer some opportunity for individuals to process their experience and to heal the wounds to their psyche. This aligns very much with the way in which social support is important in influencing coping behavior and fostering successful adaptation to life crises (see Rokach & VanderVoort, 2007; Schafer & Moos, 1998).

The literature on counselling is extensive and we do not intend to explore it here). However, what is noteworthy when we think about victimhood is that some individuals seem more resistant to psychological damage – just as some people are more resistant to physical illness or less likely to break bones.

Some individuals seem to be able to extricate themselves from the mire whilst others despair at the thought of ever escaping. Is there a character trait or quality that allows these individuals to emerge victorious from a state that is so perplexing and engulfing whilst others endure the state of victimhood for their entire lives? Are there strategies that victims might adopt to help them in overcoming their situation, mitigating their condition, even aiding the individual to rise above injustices and become victorious?

One of the key characteristics that seems to make some more resilient to the inevitable events of suffering in one's life is related to the notion of optimism. It would be remiss not to observe that the value of this quality has long been recognized and one famous victim-victor, Hellen Keller, wrote a short book about the quality: *Optimism* (1903).

More recently, empirical research in psychology has turned to the question of what makes some of us more resilient than others. Why are some people more successful in turning their lives around after adverse events in their lives? Are some people born lucky and others unlucky? In his best-selling book *The Resiliency Advantage*, Al Siebert (2009, p.2) argued that:

“Highly resilient people are flexible, adapt to new circumstances quickly, and thrive in constant change. Most important, they expect to bounce back and feel confident that they will. They have a knack for creating good luck out of circumstances that many others see as bad luck.”

Some psychologists are proponents of this view, agreeing with Siebert's notion that those who empathize with others experience less pain and are less lonely, ultimately assisting in their faster rate of recovery. However, whilst some people may be born with more resilience than others, according to psychologists, it is possible to cultivate more of it. In addition to optimism, Hagelson et al. (2006) also consider that positive reappraisal and spirituality also contribute to resilience in an individual and their ability to overcome hardship.

Overall, we might think of resilience as something that we can cultivate in order to cope with the inevitable traumas and tragedies that will come our way in our lifetime. In general, the idea of resilience is about individuals who are more able to absorb traumatic events and victimization in a psychological sense. The psychological literature suggests that the idea of resilience is a useful one offering approaches to positive adaptation despite adversity, and more generally, offering vital opportunities in managing social policies to promote the well-being of disadvantaged, high-risk individuals in our society (e.g., Luthar and Cicchetti 2007).

The stories presented in this book offer a more qualitative opportunity to explore the kinds of characteristics that underlie this resilience, how the victims have become victorious, the qualities and characteristics that the individuals possess and the strategies they employed to achieve resilience in the face of adversity.

Positive Psychology

The second approach we wish to focus on is inspired by the more recent orientation of psychology towards the positive rather than the negative. This domain of psychology is more oriented toward the thriving as noted earlier. In the language of psychology, it is akin to the concept of self-actualization (the peak of Maslow's needs hierarchy). The self-help literature has long reflected this kind of approach with Wayne Dyer for instance, a doctoral student of Abraham Maslow, going on to write many books and give presentations and workshops aimed at helping people to achieved self-actualization.

While Maslow may have introduced the concept of a needs hierarchy with self-actualization at its peak, the significant shift in focus from fixing the negative to encouraging the positive was led by Martin Seligman who describes his motivation for founding the now flourishing field of positive psychology. There appear to have been two key events. One was a serendipitous meeting with Csikszentmihalyi, in 1997, the other was an epiphany that took place during a conversation with his daughter in his garden. In 1999, Seligman became a leading advocate of the positive psychology movement when he introduced the concept in his Presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1999. From this followed numerous conceptualizations, networks, committees, books, summits and journals where the importance of this field became firmly established (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006)

A recent framework developed by Seligman in positive psychology is a useful way of capturing some of the elements that might help victims escape from victimhood. Called the PERMA model, Seligman (2011) suggests there are five elements essential for an individual's well-being:

- **Positive Emotion** – a focus on the present and optimism about the future
- **Engagement** – captures Csikszentmihalyi's notion of "flow", the way in which we become absorbed in our life and work
- **Relationship** – strong social networks in which we can communicate and share thoughts and feelings and ideas
- **Meaning** – the purpose or meaning within our life, something congruent with our personal values and beliefs and which we serve
- **Accomplishment** – mastery and success in completing activities, achieving goals

These five elements might be helpful for victims seeking to end the interminable jumble of thoughts around pain and hurt.

Psychology then offers multiple approaches to dealing with the problems experienced by victims. Some, primarily counselling approaches, are focused on helping to allay the negative effects of trauma, to helping to alleviate and ultimately eliminate the negative mental states. These might generally be cast as fitting with the notion of healing. At the other extreme is another offer from psychology which has most recently been referred to as positive psychology, and this fits with the idea of the individual not merely healing, but getting stronger, that is thriving. Somewhere between the two is the idea of resilience which is built from the observation that some people seem better able to bounce back from traumatic events.

We highlight that resilience and positive psychology represent complements to one another, indeed, it may be noted that they overlap in some regards which might be considered to be encouraging. Yates and Masten (2004) have juxtaposed the aforementioned frameworks and provided a concise explanation of the roles that each approach plays. In their view, positive psychology is seen to accentuate the study of human strength and virtue with a view to understanding and facilitating developmental outcomes. The resilience perspective on the other hand focuses on research and practice as a tool for realizing the goals of positive psychology. Yates and Masten suggest that "resilience describes patterns of positive adaptation that reflect the normative operation of fundamental developmental processes under non-normative conditions" (Yates & Masten, 2004, p.536), that is how individuals manage to extricate themselves from victimhood.

With these various psychological frameworks, our book aims to provide evidence that positive outcomes are achievable in spite of the sometimes horrendous odds of overcoming adversity. The trajectories of the victims portrayed in the personal accounts are elaborated from a personal point of view or through that of a third party. Each author takes part in an awareness raising exercise that can illuminate the path toward recovery for victims who wish to extricate themselves from this situation.

We now move on to consider the more ancient approaches offered by philosophy, to see whether they might offer some useful insights.

PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is often considered a relatively esoteric and irrelevant discipline, but it has not always been so. For much of human history, philosophy has been considered to be a practice as much as about ideas. The basis of this practice has often centered on self-reflection and self-examination.

The ancient Greek Delphi oracle was engraved with the words: "Know thyself." Socrates famously stated "an unexamined life is not worth living." And the Buddha encouraged self-reflection and meditation.

On the other hand, can self-reflection help a victim? Is a victim not someone who spends an *enormous* amount of time in self-reflection and self-examination: reflecting on the events leading to their becoming a victim, the reasons why it happened, how it might have been different, and so forth? And as most that have had this experience know, this self-reflection does not seem to be very helpful. Indeed, self-reflection seems to be symptomatic of the problem rather than a solution to the problem. How then might self-reflection help?

Philosophical self-reflection is a critical process, one that seeks to separate truth from falsehood, and it seeks to do this through reason. Speculation about what might have been is not reasoning. It is mental processing, but it

is rather like a car spinning its wheels, it is like taking a journey in a rocking chair: you can go all day long, but you won't get anywhere³.

The philosophical practices that are perhaps most relevant to the problems confronting victims are those of the ancient Greeks. One of the best known of the early Greek philosophers is Socrates who never wrote anything down, rather his history was related by one of his students, Plato.

The historical Socrates was an interesting character who liked to stop people on the street and talk to them. This would have, perhaps, been okay except that he liked to challenge them in what they believed to be true, and he particularly enjoyed doing this to those that were rather fond of, perhaps even overestimating their own wisdom.

Socrates lived a relatively long life, but in his 70s, he ended up being targeted in something of a political battle and was accused of corrupting the youth of Athens. He was charged, gave his defense before a court (made up of 500 citizens), and was found guilty as charged by a narrow margin. He then pleaded for a lenient sentence, but was ultimately sentenced (by a majority of the court of 500) to die. The sentence was to be carried out by his own hand – he was to drink a cup of poison hemlock. And this he did!

It is perhaps harder to think of a more inspiring example of a victim overcoming victimhood. Socrates chose to die rather than give up the life he thought worth living. Without that life, he would rather part.

Perhaps one of the best known philosophical approaches to healing may be found in the Stoic system of thought. There remain few writings from the original Greek sources, most of the best known writings being from Roman sources (e.g., Seneca, Marcus Aurelius). However, the central tenet of the Stoic system that gives us a useful insight into how this philosophy might help the victim escape the rocking-chair journey appears at the beginning of a famous handbook of Stoicism written by Epictetus, himself a freed slave:

“There are things which are within our power, and there are things which are beyond our power.” (Epictetus, The Enchiridion, I)

The victim who feels their victimhood has not yet let go of the circumstances in which they were victimized. If these circumstances are in the past, then clearly there is nothing the victim can do to change them. So the victim's reflection on what has happened in the past offers little resolution, it is not a path to escaping the state.

In this framework then, philosophy might offer a cure. Many of the writings of Epictetus, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius might offer some consolation to someone who is suffering, who is feeling the pain of victimization. The important point about this healing is that it is internal to the individual victim. It does not depend on external factors, it depends only on what the individual can control for herself – and all that she can control are her own thoughts and actions.

So, what of flourishing, what of thriving? How might this be achieved? In general, this is achieved by cultivating *arête* or excellence or virtue. This is not virtue as judged by others, but virtue as judged by the self. An individual who engages in self-reflection has an opportunity to determine what is important to herself, to focus on those qualities that she values. The striving for these objectives is what creates the flourishing and the thriving.

The important point is that the qualities in which a person wants to excel are really up to the individual herself. They are not determined by someone externally. They could be one or more of the four basic Stoic virtues: wisdom, self-discipline, compassion and justice. But they could be other qualities. The important element is that the striving for flourishing is dedication to a goal that distracts the individual from cycling endlessly and negatively in and around elements of an experience that cannot be changed.

It might be noted that the philosophical framework suggested here has some interesting parallels with modern psychological techniques. For instance, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is in many ways aligned with Stoic philosophy, particularly as regards the element of finding peace and calm and tranquillity, the healing. In addition, certain psychological constructs such as Maslow's needs hierarchy (and particularly Self Actualization at the peak), Frankl's logotherapy (therapy aimed at helping individuals find their purpose and meaning) and positive psychology overlap with the second element of Stoic philosophy aimed at the development of excellence.

The contributions of Stoic thinking to overcoming victimhood, both in terms of healing and in terms of thriving are neatly captured in what is often referred to today as the Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change
The courage to change the things that I can
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

The first line refers to the healing goal of stoic philosophy, of seeking tranquility and calm by accepting, in a detached way, the things that have happened and which cannot be changed. The second line refers to the thriving

³ Erma Bombeck, *God's Little Devotional Book for Mothers*, “Worry is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere”

goal of stoic philosophy, of seeking to live a flourishing life, one full of meaning. This is achieved by pursuing excellence, by making our mark on life – not just our own life, but the lives of others. The wisdom that is referred to could refer to one of the primary Stoic virtues, wisdom – sometimes referred to as practical wisdom or prudence.

CLOSING WORDS

The story of victimhood is important, but what we think is more important are the stories of those who have risen out of the ashes of their victimhood. Perhaps they had a more modest goal of finding a cure, perhaps they had the more ambitious goal of thriving. Either way, the stories of victims finding victory offer a richness that is far beyond the material, they offer a salve for the soul of others, and an offer of hope. They offer an inspiration.

We believe that there *is* a path out of victimhood, two in fact, and that we are not automatically set along these paths, but rather, we must choose to pursue the path. So, it is not the passage of time that is important, but what I choose to do in that passage of time. Recovery is not passive and static, it is dynamic and requires the active participation of the victim. The example of others may show us the way.

The primary objective of this book is to present growth as a consequence of having been victimized. The underlying theme of our chapters portrays the victims on their trajectory from victimhood toward resilience, strength and growth. Whilst eclectic in its structure the resounding message that undergirds our book is that victims can become victorious, rise from the ashes, free of the shackles that bind them (see Pietruch & Jobson, 2012).

Victimhood is a particularly personal experience. Like the experience of pain in general, the experience of victimhood is an intensely personal and subjective experience. We therefore present this book in two parts. The first part provides “outsider” views of the victim’s journey to victor, the second part provides “insider” views of this same journey. The outsider / insider distinction reflects a distinction between clinician and client, theory and practice. The outsider views present academic thought and theory on how a victim might become victor. The insider views present personal accounts, “auto-ethnographies” (Goodall 2008; Lilgendahl & McAdams 2011; Poulos 2008) of those who have made – or are still in the process of making – the transition from victim to victor.

The book is therefore, a unique collection of outsider and insider views, of academic thought and personal insight. We note that various scenarios of victimhood representing a range of suffering are presented. And perhaps none of the types of victimhood described comes close to the great suffering borne by some others who are notable in our world such as Mandela, Chaplin, Poulsson and others mentioned earlier. However, pain is again, notoriously personal and regardless of its degree, we believe that the ideas we offer for dealing with victimhood have wide application. The important question is not the degree of pain that is experienced, but how to escape victimhood. This book offers tools, therapies, thoughts, ideas, insights that can help the victim fly to victory, to emerge from the fire as a Phoenix.

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